

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of the present application, as now amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested. Claims 1-15, 17-20, 22-25, 27, 31-50, 91, 96-235, and 245-260 remain active.

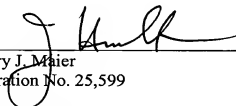
The discussion granted by Examiner MacNeil and Supervisory Primary Examiner Sirmons is hereby acknowledged and is sincerely appreciated. During the discussion, a review was conducted of the claims of the Amendment filed September 7, 2007 along with a review of the prior art of record including, in particular, Danks et al. (U.S.P. 5,607,440), including the disclosure set forth in Figure 7B, 8B and 9B showing the features of the shroud 51 which serve to guard the blade 81. It was therefore agreed that it would be helpful if additional limitations were added to the independent claims where necessary to more clearly define over the shield end 51. In response thereto, Applicant has therefore submitted the attached amendments to the independent claims where necessary to claim that the guard used to guard the blade is a substantially planar guard which is clearly unlike the shield 51 having raised surfaces so as to act as an expander. This differs from the present invention insofar as expanders which are spaced separately from the substantially planar guard used to guard the substantially planar blade are provided in the present invention. Insofar as there is no teaching or disclosure in Danks et al. '440 or any of the remaining references of record of the utilization of the limitations of each of the independent claims including the feature of a substantially planar guard, it is submitted that each of the claims as now amended patentably define over the prior art of record. It is further noted in this regard that the limitation of a substantially planar guard already is claimed in many of the claims in the present invention including, for example, Claim 34. Accordingly, it is submitted that the limitations now added to the claims find full support in the application as originally filed.

Applicant's also submit that the shroud 51 clearly does not teach an apex angle as presently claimed and instead has a blunt tip which forms an apex angle which is substantially larger than that of the blade 81.

In view of the foregoing, an early and favorable Office Action is believed to be in order and the same is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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